

# Monthly Message from the Chief

**June 2011**

During our “Wildfire Awareness Week” celebration in May, I was able to spend time visiting with firefighters in several units. It is very important to me to maintain a strong connection with the field and I always enjoy sitting down with engine companies and other Unit personnel to discuss issues of concern or interest regardless of rank or position. I was impressed, but not surprised by the level of candor and professionalism shown by our firefighters. I hope our conversations were as informative for those I had the opportunity to speak with as they were for me.



In virtually every location across the State, the common question was, “Do you support Schedule A contracts?” My answer was, and is, simple and straightforward. I strongly support our local government cooperative fire protection agreements. I would like to take the opportunity with this month’s message to share my view of this program and the importance of these agreements.

Statewide, CAL FIRE has more than 80 years experience in providing urban fire and all hazard emergency response services to local governments. As fire service professionals, CAL FIRE personnel are trained to the same high level of all hazard fire protection and emergency response as the rest of the fire service in California. Under Public Resources Code (PRC) Sections 4142 and 4144, CAL FIRE is authorized to enter into these cooperative agreements to provide local emergency response. These provisions allow local governments to determine, establish and fund the level of service that meets their needs.

Currently, CAL FIRE has over 145 cooperative agreements with local governments. These agreements range from dispatch-only services to fully integrated, cooperative, regional fire protection systems. These agreements with CAL FIRE include a number of counties, cities and districts across the State.

It is important for all of us to understand the value of these agreements. These relationships are mutually beneficial to both CAL FIRE and the local government partner. These benefits include:

- Economies of Scale: Both partners have access to a greater depth of resources at the Unit, Region and State level.
  - CAL FIRE cooperative agreement personnel and equipment are available to assist with meeting CAL FIRE's State responsibilities.

- Funding from local partners, through Amador Agreements, allows for the full utilization of State resources to meet both the State and local missions during the winter months. Without these agreements, these resources would not be available during this period to serve the public.
- CAL FIRE's resources, including bulldozers and hand crews, are available to respond to our local partners for local emergencies through the integrated system.
- Efficiency: In a regional system, administrative personnel and the command and control system are shared and directly coordinated.
- Local Control: Partner agencies maintain their individual identity and specify their individual level of service, which can be modified to meet changing community needs and fiscal demands.

The concept of an integrated, cooperative, regional fire protection system as it applies to fire organizations is critical to providing the most valuable, responsive and cost effective service to the taxpayer. We must always recognize that we work for the public and that efficient regional systems best demonstrate the cost effective fire protection services they expect.

I fully support these agreements, however, they must be in the best interest of both CAL FIRE and the local partner agency. The PRC requires these agreements to be beneficial to the State. During this challenging economy, there is a rise in the number of inquiries from local governments requesting information or proposals from CAL FIRE. Many of these inquiries are just part of the local jurisdictions' exercising their due diligence to assure they are delivering the most cost effective services to their residents. Public agencies are looking for models of good government and leveraging the financial benefits of working together to provide critical public safety functions. CAL FIRE will continue to evaluate each of these requests to determine which are appropriate and beneficial to both parties.

Integrated, cooperative, regional fire protection systems are the most efficient and effective model for the delivery of fire protection services that the public expects and deserves. CAL FIRE will continue to be a strong partner in these systems where they provide mutual benefit to the State and local government.